

BOARD FOR JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

Civil Equal Justice

Whereas, equal justice for all under law is fundamental to our democracy, and its realization is central to the effective operation of our system of government; and

Whereas, the promise of equal justice under law rings hollow for tens of thousands of vulnerable low-income individuals and families in Washington state who have no meaningful access to our civil justice system; and

Whereas, lack of meaningful access to the civil justice system has a devastating impact on vulnerable and low-income people who are unable to assert, defend or enforce important legal rights, severely limits the judiciary's ability to dispense justice fairly and impartially, and as a result works to erode public trust and confidence in our justice system; and

Whereas, Washington state's civil equal justice system is unable to adequately meet the civil justice needs of vulnerable and low-income individuals and families, and continues to be in need of a substantial and immediate increase in underwriting public support;

Whereas, a primary purpose of the United States Constitution is to "establish justice," and that under the Washington State Constitution it is the duty of the judiciary to ensure that "justice in all cases shall be administered . . . without unnecessary delay;" and

Whereas, the judicial branch has a fundamental duty to promote and ensure equal access to the justice system; and

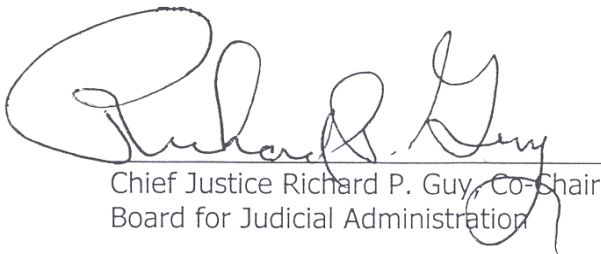
Whereas, the Board for Judicial Administration was established to provide effective leadership to the state judiciary and to develop policies that enhance the administration of the justice system in Washington State; and

Whereas, the Board for Judicial Administration recognizes the importance of working with the entire judiciary, the Washington State Bar Association, the Governor, the Legislature, the Congress and the public at large to secure an adequate level of funding for civil equal justice services, and address other issues that limit or inhibit access to the civil justice system for vulnerable low-income people in Washington State;

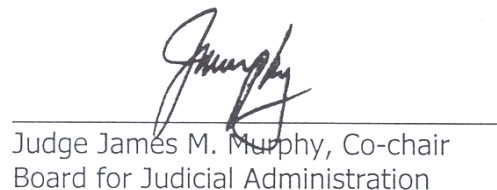
Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved:

That the Board for Judicial Administration:

1. Declares that the unavailability of civil equal justice services for vulnerable and low-income people severely limits the administration of justice in Washington state, and joins with the Washington State Bar Association and the civil equal justice community in their commitment to exercise leadership to expand public and private funding to levels commensurate with the need; and
2. Calls upon the Governor, the Legislature, Congress and local officials to substantially increase state, federal and local support for civil legal assistance;
3. Commits to work in partnership with the entire judiciary, the WSBA, the civil equal justice community, local bar organizations and other justice system partners to:
 - Develop viable and effective plans, both short and long term, to establish or increase funding and support for civil legal services for poor and vulnerable people; and
 - Expand the types of assistance available for unrepresented consumers of the justice system; and
 - Remove impediments to access to the justice system, including physical and language barriers, rules and procedures, disparate treatment and other differences that may serve as barriers.



Chief Justice Richard P. Guy, Co-Chair
Board for Judicial Administration



Judge James M. Murphy, Co-chair
Board for Judicial Administration